

Boston, Feb. 18, 1850.

Dear Mr. Webb,

If you have not yourself quite forgotten the little note you addressed to me in July last (respecting T. Parker, &c. &c.) you will certainly think I have, and may have been disposed to blame me for so long a silence. But it never has been forgotten by me, and I have never ceased ^{from} my good intentions to reply to it. But, several things stood in the way ^{of an early reply}, and, First, Your own intimation that you did not expect it, and your saying that Anne Weston would forward my letter; having inquired of her (soon after the receipt of your letter, which was Sept. 11), I learned that she had no expectation of sending to you ~~at~~ very soon. Then, Second, I have been hoping to grow better able to answer your queries about Theo. Parker, for I knew I could not with due skill sketch him out for you. And, Third, ever since your letter came, I have been very busy; we have had a most excellent autumn and winter for anti-slavery labours, and have endeavoured to make the most of it; and we are sure that our labours have not been in vain. The truth, of God's own teaching, wherewith He is ever ready to enlighten every man that cometh into the world, has found a welcome to many a heart, and been the good seed falling upon good ground. What with lectures in the extreme Western part of Massachusetts, and the extreme South-eastern part, & intermediately ~~at~~ a little, and the preparations for & then the carrying through the Annual Fair, and then our Annual Meeting in January - these, in addition to the standing business of my office, have compelled me to seem very neglectful of my correspondents. - Let me assure you that your little note gave me very great pleasure - so it did, emphatically, to my Mother, who (through good report & evil report) has been a very warm admirer & zealous friend of Theodore Parker from the very first time she heard him preach - 10 years ago at least. I wish I could possibly send you back a satisfactory reply; but, as I said

before, as I shall not pretend to do this, you will be pleased to hear that I have asked Mr. Garrison to send you his views of Parker, when he writes to you, as he hopes to do by this opportunity.

I am very glad of the warm interest you feel in T. Parker, for he is both a great man, and a good man. I judge him to be about 36 yrs. old, tho' from the baldness of the top of his head, he looks older. In his manner, both private and in speaking, he is simplicity itself - some call him awkward - he certainly is ~~not~~ graceful. The whole force of his preaching consists in the weight of his matters, and in the quiet, natural, unpretending way in which he enunciates the most striking & often startling thoughts. Five years ago he was invited to come to Boston (from West Roxbury, 7 miles distant) and take charge of a new congregation, or, more properly speaking, to preach to such audiences as might collect to hear him, - the fact having become uncontestedly established that the number of such was very large. He has had, & has now, a large congregation of those who regularly attend his preaching, and then there is a large floating class of the curious, the unsettled, strangers in town, and the like, who compose the remainder of his audience. They meet in a very large building (called the Melodeon) in the principal street of the City - a building that easily seats 15 or 1600 (and I know not but 2000), and it is always full, sometimes uncomfortably so. When Mr. Pierpont was driven out of Boston & away from the pulpit of Hollis St. Church for his fidelity in the Temperance and Anti-Slavery causes, the greater portion of his adherents & friends left the Hollis St. congregation entirely & gave their support to Mr. Parker; among these were my father & mother; my father ^{has been} ~~was~~ senior Officer of the H. St. Church for some 20 yrs. at least, a personal friend to Mr. Parker, but

not readily abandoning the theological ideas he had embraced at an earlier period of his life; my mother adopts, with her whole heart & understanding, T. Parker's peculiar theological and religious views, & finds a satisfaction in them which she knows not how, often, to express. During the 24^r years that I have been connected with the Mass. A. S. Socy (as Agent), which has made Boston my headquarters, I have ^{almost} always been a hearer of Mr. Parker, when I had an unoccupied Sunday in the City. No preaching I have ever ^{for any length of time} heard will bear any comparison with his for its fullness, richness, depth, power. It feeds the mind, it feeds the moral nature, it wakes up the whole soul, and makes it feel how good, beautiful, & instructive is that perfect freedom to which the Pursuit of Truth invites every man. Garrison is a very constant hearer of T. Parker, when he is in the City, and he (as well as the Abolitionists generally) are on the most friendly and cordial terms with him. — Mr. Parker is a great student; his library & study are not empty terms — they are tools & workshop. He is a truly learned man — much more so than Dr. Channing ever was; yes, to answer your question, I think him a much more original mind than Dr. C., though the question of their comparative greatness, I do not feel quite equal to settling. — I believe T. P. will make a deeper mark than Dr. Channing on the age, present and to come, — & that, I am aware, is saying a great deal. I know bolder & more uncompromising men than Mr. Parker, but he is very bold & fearless, especially in comparison with the dreadful cowards which fill the Boston pulpits generally, — ^(had there an exception) — who have scarcely a word to utter, from year's beginning to year's end, on the terrible violations of God's law going on continually in this Nation, with the sanction of its Laws and with the approbation of its Religion. Parker is (I was going to say) generations ahead, & out of sight, of these timid dwarfs;

but I don't think that generations of time, & of eternity too, can
bring up some of these men to a conception of a true, self-sustaining,
God-relying, manly character. I was twelve years in the Unitⁿ Ministry
closely allied with the Unitⁿ Ministers; it took a long time to get my eyes
fairly open to their temporizing, selfish course, and the hard-heartedness
of many of their principal men. — I cannot go to hear such preach now
for I have no respect for them; and though I do not adopt all Mr.
Parker's theological ideas, by any means, (I confess I have not made
them a fresh study), yet so do I admire his fearlessness, his human
heart, his loyalty to Right, his bold rebuke of Wrong, that my
every fibre recognises him as a God-taught teacher — not infallible
of course, but one of God's prophets. — It is just as I suspected
it would be; I have scribbled over nigh 4 pages, and yet told you
probably scarcely anything of T. P. you wish to know. I will look at
your questions, seriatim. — Mr. P. has a very warm sympathy
with man, both in his suffering & his sinning, & has been the ^{agent} ~~means~~
of the rescue of some from moral death. — As to his connexion with
the Abolitionists, & how far he goes with them, & where he differs from
them, you will find the best information on these points (that I know
of) in the report of his Speech made at Worcester the 3^d of August
last (see Liberator) — and also in a brief sketch, of some remarks he
made at our late Annual Meeting in this city, to be found in the
Liberator of 2 or 3 weeks ago. He does not go with us at all on the
point of a Dissolution of the existing Union, though he admits the
Compromises with Slavery, the Bargain with the Slaveholders, made
in the U. S. Constitution. I cannot, I confess, get rid of the
notion that, herein, is a weak point in Mr. P.'s mind; he seems
to be looking for a happy medium between extremes, as he would call them.

Just so at the time the Sabbath (or Anti-Sabbath) Convention was held in this City a year since. He confined himself to giving a view of the right & Christian use of Sunday - a very good work in itself - but avoided, rather, the real point, Is there an obligatory Sabbath now - one day holier than the rest, on which it is sinful, & therefore should be made unlawful, to do any work, &c. &c., or has the Christian been called to a perfect freedom from all the Jewish outward observances, the Sabbath as well the New Moons, Circumcision, Sacrifices, &c. - Many years ago, you said to me in a note, "Garrison is my hero", and I have never forgotten the words. They are very true, - Garrison has the real elements of Heroism - perfect devotion to his objects, - an entire self-surrender to what he sees to be the truth - a perfect willingness to undergo martyrdom, if that be necessary - but a thorough determination to make no qualification, no parleying, no terms with any thing that is wrong, or untrue, or that falls short of the highest Standard of Truth & Duty he can realize. Now T. Parker, I think, with all my admiration & regard for him, does not do this - though, as I said before, his approximation to it puts him almost immeasurably ahead of most of the men around him. - T. P. lives now in Boston; in the summer months, at West Roxbury, where the Aunt (and for a long time foster-Mother) of his Wife lived, & where she died a year or more since. He was poor (i.e. pecuniarily) himself, but by marriage (and since the death of the Aunt) has become possessed of a competency, which puts him above dependence on any Congregation. He lives comfortably, even handsomely, but without ostentation or extravagance - is liberal in his gifts, so far as I have the means of knowing.

This chief associates & warmest friends are such men as Dr.
Saml. G. Howe, Director of the Massachusetts Asylum for the Blind,
Horace Mann, long Secretary of the Board of Education in Massachusetts,
(in fact the whole Board, & the main-spring of the educational revival
in New England during the past 12 years or more) - Ralph Waldo
Emerson, the Essayist & Poet. I suspect Mr. Parker's intimate friends
are few, leaving the out & out Abolitionists out of the question. He has
been marked, by the Chief priests and Pharisees, the little great men
of their generation, as a dangerous man, heretic & infidel, and
this has dissuaded some, & prevented others from getting near him,
among the Unitarian Ministers, his old associates & brethren (!),
a very few retain their respect, confidence & affection, - such as John
T. Pargent of this city, Caleb Stetson formerly of Medford, John
Peirpont now of Medford, John Weiss of New Bedford, Samuel
J. May of Syracuse, N.Y., D. W. Higginson of Newburyport, and
a few more. Mr. Parker's hearers are not ~~composed~~ the
most wealthy, ^{are not} the fashionable, the magnates of Boston Society.
But they are thinking (as well as working) men and women, of
every class, occupation, & profession in the community, and
comprise a large proportion of those who are known to be ~~the~~ ^{the}
most active in every good, righteous & benevolent cause. It
is decidedly one of the best congregations in the city, if worth of
character, & real intelligence, are admitted to form essential & prominent
elements in making such a decision. - I purpose to send you an
address which T. P. has lately delivered in the State of New York - one of his
very boldest productions; perhaps I shall send others. - Perhaps you will
be interested to hear that Thos. Parker is thought, by many persons, ^{to bear a strong personal re-}
^{semblance to one Richard D. Webb of} Dublin.

So large or weighty as yourself! He is not physically so large or weighty as yourself! At I remember you, the likeness is not very striking to me; he is not physically so large or weighty as yourself!

In your note you speak of Mr. Knicker, the former Editor of the "Inquirer", and you do me the real honour (and I think justice) to say you believe me right in my estimate of his course, though Mr. Lalar thinks me uncharitable. I had every motive to incline me to a favorable, a partial estimate of ~~the~~ Mr. Knicker; but my disappointment in him was complete. It was mortifying and painful to see a man, who spoke out so well in England, so entirely dumb in America, where his words were needed and might have had a powerful effect. I hear nothing of him now. What a grand reply Mr. Lalar made to Thos. Carlyle - Carlyle, the contemptible, conceited, yes! the low-minded fellow! Who, but an essentially vulgar soul, could speak of a whole section of the human race, because of their (real or supposed) inferiority, humbleness, degradation, with the contempt, and ridicule he used, & seemed to revel in? Mr. Lalar's review & reply was grand - it was temperate, but severe; - what could Carlyle have been thinking about, when he penned that article?

Whether we are ever to get anything from Joshua Coffin of the early history of the Antislavery enterprise, I do not know. It is many months since I heard a word from him, and Mr. Estlin, for some time past, has made no mention of receiving any communications from him.

As to the last topic of your note - wherein you (with apparent soberness) call on me to suggest any improvements in your Standard letters - I am truly puzzled what to say.

As I remember you, the likeness is not very striking to me; he is not physically as yourself!

Except this - it is easy to say that, to my certain knowledge, there is much interest felt in your letters, - an interest I have repeatedly heard expressed by very good judges, gentlemen and ladies. But to criticize them, & show you where & how to make them better! - I wish I could do it, - then perhaps would I take to letter-writing myself! - You may rely upon it, your letters are very welcome, are read with interest and ^{with} a moral reliance upon their facts & sentiments, and form a very valuable part of the "Standard" matter. ~~that~~ We would like to see them oftener; for of late you appear to have been withdrawing your hand.

I wish Garrison were in better health; he has worked unusually hard the past 6 months, lecturing & speaking a great deal besides all his editorial labours. He has had ~~the~~ hemorrhoids very badly & painfully this winter; and has had a good deal of sickness in his family - the house where he now lives is not, I fear, in a healthy spot. Mr. Phillips is in better health than, a year since, I ever thought to see him. Your other friends here are, for the most part, well. — Dublin is associated in my mind with A delightful days - Dublin and its free, frank & hospitable homes. My affectionate regards to your brothers, to James Haughton, and to Richard Allen. - I wanted to write to J. Haughton, but I shall not have time. The 15/ you sent to me, through R. F. Wallcut, to pay a bill here for Rev G. A. Armstrong, was so appropriated - as the accompanying receipt will show, which please (at your convenience) transmit to Mr. A.

With much respect, Yours, Samuel May Jr.
To Richard D. Webb, Dublin.

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